

GEF Annual Thematic Evaluation Report 2012



The second *Annual Thematic Evaluation Report of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)* Independent Evaluation Office presents an overview of the progress of the Evaluation of

GEF Enabling Activities and the main conclusions and recommendations for the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies.

Progress on the GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation

The Evaluation of the GEF Enabling Activities began in May 2012. It aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing enabling activities and evaluative evidence of their role in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. The first phase of this evaluation entails a meta-evaluation to collect evaluative evidence from previous evaluations conducted by the Office, GEF Agencies, conventions and other stakeholders. The second phase will build on the findings of this meta-evaluation and explore further issues or gaps of evaluative evidence. The main findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be incorporated into the GEF's Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5).

Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies

The GEF Focal Area Strategies Evaluation was conducted between February and September 2012. Its main objective was to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 (2010–14) focal area strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions.

The study was designed as a formative evaluation that emphasized learning. It was intended to inform the development and improvement of strategies for GEF-6 (2014–18).

The evaluation encompassed the analysis of the following strategies: biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters, land degradation, chemicals, sustainable forest management/ REDD+, and climate change adaptation (under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund). The methodological approach used in the evaluation included constructing theories of change to identify causal pathways toward achievement of each strategy's objectives, reviewing the relationship with convention guidance, assessing the connection with scientific knowledge, and using the Real-Time Delphi method for expert consultation.

Overall, the evaluation found that these strategies fulfill crucial functions in guiding GEF programming, are largely responsive to convention guidance, and correspond with current scientific consensus. The construction of theories of change for each focal area revealed that, in most cases, the strategies do not draw on a systematic identification of the envisaged causal relationships between different elements of the relevant strategy. The potential for broader adoption of results is recognized in the strategies, but the pathways to do so are not systematically considered. The evaluation also found that the strategies do not have a comprehensive approach for multifocal area activities.

Findings

- The GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill an important function for GEF programming by defining areas of GEF activities, providing a general rationale for GEF engagement in these areas, and identifying the types of activities to receive GEF support.
- The GEF-5 focal area strategies are not based on systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between strategy elements or of connections between GEF activities and expected results.

- The GEF-5 focal area strategies recognize the potential for broader adoption of results, but in most cases do not systematically consider the pathways that could maximize the catalytic role of GEF activities.
- The GEF-5 focal area strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between focal areas through multifocal area activities.
- GEF activities regardless of focal area employ a certain “toolbox” of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each focal area strategy, but are similar in their design.
- Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF focal area strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving global environmental benefits.
- GEF focal area strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. Guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity has been detailed and restrictive, which has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.
- Based on results of the Real-Time Delphi process, the elements of GEF-5 focal area strategies, with few exceptions, correspond with current scientific consensus. From a scientific perspective, room for improvement exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.

Recommendations

- An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of the GEF-6 strategies.
- GEF-6 strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing multifocal area projects that would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.

- GEF-6 strategies should be based on systematic considerations of potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF’s catalytic role.
- Given the impact of convention guidance on the focal area strategies, the GEF should continue the dialogue with the Convention on Biological Diversity to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies to facilitate responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.
- GEF-6 strategies should revisit the GEF’s overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

Follow-Up

In November 2012, the GEF Council requested the GEF Secretariat to ensure that an explicit discussion on envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge forms the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 strategies; and that GEF-6 strategies enable a more flexible and strategic approach multifocal area projects, which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF. The full version of the *GEF Annual Thematic Review 2012* (Evaluation Report No. 79) is available on the GEF Independent Evaluation Office website, www.gefeo.org. Also available on the website is the *Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies* (Evaluation Report No.78) and the ongoing *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation*. For more information, please contact the Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.